



## Westlands Water District

3130 N. Fresno Street, P.O. Box 6056, Fresno, California 93703-6056, (559) 224-1523, FAX (559) 241-6277

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 20, 2009

**CONTACT:** Sarah Woolf 559-341-0174

### **WATER ALLOCATION**

**0%**

The Westlands Water District today issued the following statement by General Manager Tom Birmingham.

For the first time in the history of the Central Valley Project, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation has announced that farmers will receive none of the water they are allocated.

Zero.

Farmers in the Westlands Water District have already begun destroying thousands of acres of almond orchards and plan on fallowing over 300,000 acres of land. Wherever possible, almond production will be stunted in hopes of keeping the trees alive through this desperate time. But there is no question that many years worth of investments will inevitably be lost.

The human impact is worse. The latest estimates from the University of California predict that upwards of 75,000 people will lose their jobs this year and more than \$2 billion will be lost from the state's economy because of the combination of drought and regulatory restrictions on water deliveries.

That only accounts for the losses to agriculture south of the Delta. The damage from water shortages to manufacturing, housing construction, the Silicon Valley and many other sectors of the economy throughout the state will add immeasurably to the ultimate toll on California's working families.

In Westlands, the crisis is well under way. Cropping decisions have already been made. The fields are being abandoned. The unemployment rate in the community of Mendota alone has soared to 40 percent.

This is not merely a natural disaster. It is the product of a broken water system that California's leaders have neglected for too long. It is the inexorable result of an inflexible regulatory regime that makes all of our water conveyance problems worse. In the months ahead, hundreds of thousands of Californians will be paying the price for the state's failure to address the need for water.

###